

**ANG****Bayan**

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Editorial

Enough is enough!

For the past four years under the US-Arroyo regime, the people's livelihood rapidly declined and the national economy sunk deeper in crisis. All the more reason why the Filipino people should oust the US-Arroyo regime.

Arroyo's claims on the supposed 6.1% growth of the gross domestic product (GDP or the local production) in the past year are hollow and useless. The monthly statistics contrived by the regime serve only to prettify if not deviously mislead.

The main sectors of the economy remain import-dependent geared for export. However, these have considerably shrunk and are now

on the verge of collapse. The slow growth of the US economy, which is the principal market for the country's exports, and the oversupply of the goods being exported by the Philippines in the world market are slowing down local production resulting in a sluggish industrial sector. The fabricated robust growth this March could not hide the fact that production for machinery and equipment, raw materials and other products for export fell by 22.5%.

The rise and fall of agricultural production estimates depend on the regime's objectives. In order to prettify statistics the past year, it padded agricultural output statistics, including palay production. In the last few months, howev-

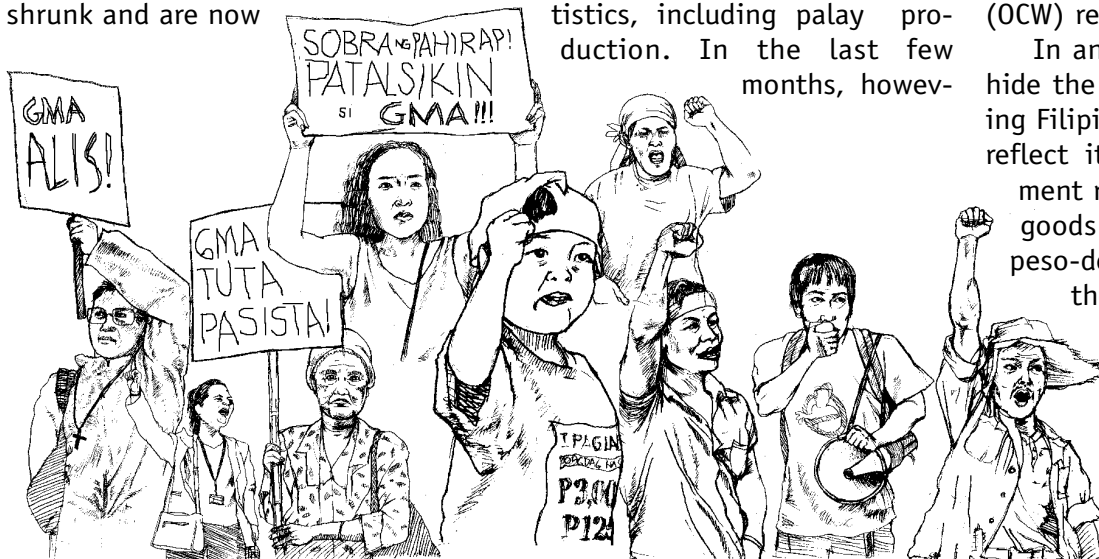
er, it arbitrarily declared that palay production fell short even if the harvest season was not yet over, in order to justify an increase in rice importation and pave the way for Malacanang-controlled rice smuggling.

The regime bloated the growth rate by manipulating the service sector data. Foremost is the estimate of the billion peso earnings of telecommunications companies, which come from overpricing their services.

Nevertheless, the regime itself admits that the "growth" of the economy is the result of massive election spending last year and billions of overseas contract workers (OCW) remittances.

In any case, the regime cannot hide the growing number of starving Filipinos and the statistics that reflect it. The highest unemployment rate, the highest prices for goods and services, the lowest peso-dollar exchange value, and the highest number of people starving are all ascribed to Arroyo's regime.

According to independent surveys, in the past 20 years, hunger statistics among Fil-



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ipinos was highest in the first three months of 2005. It is estimated that 15.5% or over 12 million Filipinos live on one dollar or PhP55 a day. Furthermore, 47.5% or over 37 million people live on less than \$2 a day.

Likewise, even in the regime's reduced and manipulated statistics, there is an increase of about one million unemployed each year. Over five million Filipino workers are underemployed. This does not include the unemployed among the 11 million "self-employed" which covers sidewalk vendors and those without a steady job. The figure also excludes the millions of workers who are "no longer looking for work" and the estimated 10 million

| Item | 2001 | 2005 |
|----------------------------|------|------|
| Minimum wage (NCR) | P250 | P250 |
| Real value (NCR) | P239 | P233 |
| Daily cost of living (NCR) | P463 | P712 |
| Inflation (%) | 2.9 | 8.5 |
| Unemployment(%) | 9.8 | 11.3 |

workers and professionals who have gone overseas.

Under Arroyo, wages have not increased even by a single centavo. Although meager, wages increased by an average of PhP20 annually since 1996. From 2001 however,

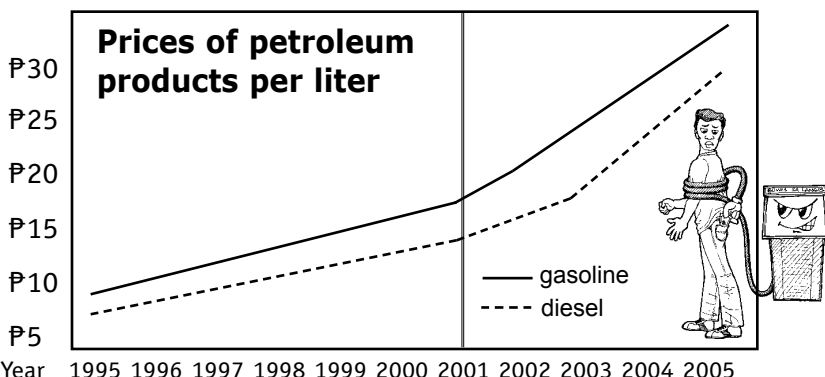
wages were pegged at PhP250 even as the cost of living of a family of six in the National Capital Region (NCR) shoot-up to PhP712 a day.

From 2001, the real value of wages has declined by PhP6 as a result of the increase in the prices of basic services and products, principally petroleum products. In the last two years alone, the price of petroleum products increased by an average of PhP6 a year. The increases have been steep compared to the PhP1.70 annual increase on the said products from 1999 to 2001.

The US-Arroyo regime has no compassion for the people. Arroyo brazenly mocks their protests and mobilizations declaring pompously that no coup d'etat, uprising or protest can oust her from power or prevent her from implementing the anti-people schemes of her regime.


Bite the bullet, she says, while her family and her cronies carouse on stolen wealth. Tighten your belts, she says, while gigantic companies siphon profits from the hard-earned wages and salaries of the workers and employees.

In the face of the excessive suffering of the Filipino people under the puppet, anti-people, rotten and fascist Arroyo regime, the reasons are ever clearer for toppling it from power. The situation demands that the streets be transformed in-



Year 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005

The prices of petroleum products started to increase sharply starting 2001. The increases are sharpest during the past two months.



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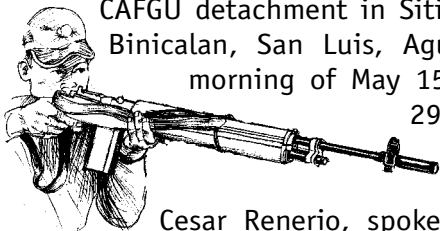
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Four rifles confiscated in Agusan del Sur

Four Garand rifles and assorted military equipment were confiscated when Red fighters under the Julio Tiro Command of the New People's Army raided the CAGU detachment in Sitio Sitin Minbalayong, Binicalan, San Luis, Agusan del Sur in the morning of May 15. One soldier of the 29th IB was also killed in the raid.



According to Ka Cesar Renerio, spokesperson of the NDF-North Central Mindanao, the raid was launched at around 6:30 in the morning after the NPA received information from the masses in the area. Elements of the CAGU and the military jumped into a ravine and ran as fast as they could, and left their weapons and military gear behind when the shooting began. The fighting lasted only 43 minutes.

The victorious raid was meant to punish the 29th IB for its deception, harassment and forcible recruitment of lumad residents of San Luis to the CAGU or the Philippine Army. AB

Military killed Mayor Arcillas

The brains behind the assassination of Mayor Leon Arcillas of Sta. Rosa, Laguna are none other than the special operatives of the AFP, according to Tirso "Ka Bart" Alcantara, spokesperson of the Melito Glor Command (MGC) of the NPA in Southern Tagalog. Ka Bart belied the AFP's accusation that the NPA in the region was behind the May 10 killing.

The murder of Arcillas was a "calculated operation" of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-Internal Security Group (ISAFP-ISG) to "foment violent attacks against the legal democratic movement" in the region and to "implicate them outright in fabricated terrorist activities."

Also involved in the killing are the brothers Raul and Romeo Aala, local officials of Sta. Rosa. The brothers are special spies of the ISAFP and share the spoils of corruption with Arcillas in Sta. Rosa. They scoop millions from the bribes of the capitalists. Now that Arcillas is gone, the brothers will corner the bureaucrat spoils.

Arcillas was notorious for his anti-people activities and butted heads with the democratic movement several times. The military is hard put to make it appear that the NPA carried out the killing in retaliation for the murder of Mely Carvajal in 2004 (who they claim Arcillas had killed). AB

Fora on CARHRIHL launched in Albay and Capiz

Fora on the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHRIHL) were launched in the provinces of Albay and Capiz in March and this May.

The fora, respectively sponsored by the provincial governments of Albay and Capiz, people's organizations and human rights advocates groups, were attended by officials and employees of local governments, government lawyers and private attorneys, human rights activists, victims of military violence and their relatives, members of people's organizations and members of the local media.

In the May 6 forum in Albay sponsored by the NDFP nominees to the Joint Secretariat (NDFP-JS), the provincial governor Fernando Gonzales stated that it was his hope that both the NDFP and the GRP would implement the provisions of the CARHRIHL for the welfare of the people. He averred that human rights must encompass not only civil and political rights but also economic, social and cultural rights.

The neighboring province of Sorsogon formally invited the NDFP-JS to launch a forum in their province as well.

In the forum in Capiz on March 9, Victor Tanco, the province's vice-governor, expressed hope that more people would realize their rights stated in the CARHRIHL. The forum in Capiz was also sponsored by the province's Committee on Justice and Human Rights and led by both representatives of the NDFP and GRP in the Joint Secretariat.

The Joint Secretariat is the staff that receives complaints regarding the violations of human rights in the name of the NDFP-GRP Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) which oversees the implementation of the CARHRIHL. The JMC is composed of three representatives from the NDFP and three representatives from the GRP. Since the JMC was established on June 4, 2004, the NDFP-JS has launched 19 trainings and fora together with sectoral, national and regional organizations in the regions of the Ilocos, Cordillera, Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Bicol, Central Visayas, Western Visayas, Northern Mindanao and Southern Mindanao. AB



Palparan: spewing bullets

In its adamance to cling to power, the US-Arroyo regime is resorting to state fascism in order to gag the people and suppress their resistance.

This is evident in the counter-revolutionary war in Eastern Visayas led by Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, the Butcher of Mindoro and now the fascist overlord of Samar and Leyte. Palparan, who was repeatedly honored and awarded medals by Gloria Arroyo, is currently the most brutal monster of the reactionary regime.

The fascist troops of the Philippine Army in Samar and Leyte are like mad dogs unleashed by Palparan. Cases of murder, abduction, disappearance of "suspects," rape, bombings and forced evacuation of communities are the order of the day.

The fascist's mouth is even spewing bullets. In his statements, Palparan flaunts his fascist intentions and his utter disregard for the rules of war and human rights.

In an interview conducted by Jasmine Bonifacio or "Bantay Jasmin" of Radyo Diwa-Tacloban on April 29, Palparan bragged about his fascist crimes. He endorsed outright the "salvaging" of peasant activists. He arrogantly celebrates the bombings and forced evacuation of the communities.

Bantay Jasmin asked Palparan about a meeting in Tacloban City where he declared that every month, he would abduct one peasant activist from barrios where the

New People's Army is strong.

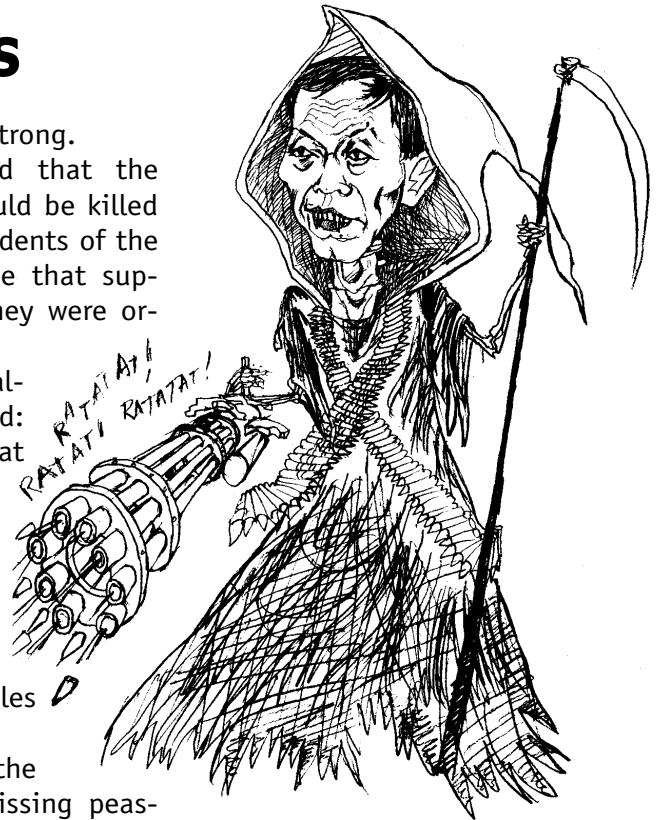
Palparan responded that the abducted peasants would be killed if the officials and residents of the barrios protest because that supposedly proves that they were organized by the NPA.

In the interview, Palparan even mentioned: "Please excuse us that we need to abduct and neutralize them one by one in the barrios. We need to do this because if we do not remove the rotten apples, all of the apples would become rotten."

When asked about the successive cases of missing peasants in Catbalogan, Northern Samar, Palparan was brazen and said: "The bad people are missing, it is good that they are missing. They are the rotten eggs. They are doing foolish things. They are the ones killing people. If we do not do anything, they will continue to do bad things. Now that we've abducted them, you are angry and ask questions."

Bantay Jasmin asked for his reaction to his being dubbed the "Butcher of Mindoro," when he was assigned there from 2001-2004. According to Palparan, "If they call me a butcher, well, so be it. I will not deny, but also I will not admit. The more you (referring to the media) talk about it, the more I will be inspired."

Palparan does not hide the re-



sponsibility of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in forming vigilante groups, particularly his responsibility in forming the Alsa Masa ("Rising Masses") in Mindoro. Says Palparan: "The Alsa Masa in Mindoro was formed when I arrived. They work at uncertain hours. They act on their own. We will not be able to rest if we monitor all their movements. They aid us in the fight against the NPA. It is the same with the likes of the RHB."

Palparan is a fascist to the core. When asked about his reaction as to why the revolutionary movement is strong in Samar, Palparan showed his extreme contempt for the masses: "The people there are lazy and refuse to work to improve their lot." AB

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to an arena of struggle between the regime clinging onto power and the people clamoring for change.

The need for revolutionary change becomes ever

clearer. Eventually, the downfall of the Arroyo regime is one step in the overall effort to end the oppressive and exploitative semi-colonial and semi-feudal system. AB

The brutal war in Samar has Palparan's trademark

Two leaders of progressive organizations were murdered and another one was seriously wounded in Eastern Visayas in the first two weeks of May.

On the night of May 12, Rev. Peter Edison Lapuz and peasant leader Alfredo Malinao were shot to death. Lapuz, 39, was the regional coordinator of Katungod-Sinirangan Bisayas (Katungod-SB) and a pastor of the North Eastern Leyte Conference of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). Malinao was the head of the Kahugpongan sa mga Mag-uuma sa San Isidro (KAMAS) and a former barangay councilor.

Lapuz and Malinao were together when they were murdered in front of Lapuz's house in Sitio Motor, Barangay Crossing, San Isidro, Leyte.

On May 8, Leo Bagares, 42, vice-chairperson of Bayan Muna in Eastern Visayas, was shot at in front of his house in Barangay Sulangan, Guiuan, Eastern Samar. He escaped death, although he sustained bullet wounds in the chest, legs and stomach.

Since March the number of progressive leaders in the region who have become targets for execution reached five. Two were killed while three have eluded death.

Meanwhile, according to the Samahan han Gudti nga Parag-uma, the number of people who have been forced to evacuate to the town center of Calbiga from the mountainous barrios of Caamlongan, Lubang, Guinbanga, Binangaran, Hindang, Hibasan, Pinangcalan and Tono has now reached almost a thousand.

The military operations in these areas have intensified, forcing people to evacuate. The AFP is directing its terrorism on the people after experiencing losses in the armed offensives of the NPA in Caamlongan, Calbiga where six AFP troops were killed.

According to Katungod-SB, they have recorded 98 cases of human rights violations and six incidents of frustrated murder ever since Palparan was transferred to the region in February. A formal case has been filed with the regional office of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) against the troops of the 62nd IB under Col. Roy Lanuzo because of the military operations which caused the widespread evacuation in Calbiga, Northern Samar.

AB

Intensifying militarization in Surigao del Sur and Quezon

Thousands of children are now the victims of intensifying militarization in Surigao del Sur. They are among those suffering intensely from the forced evacuation of their communities and the AFP blockade of food, medicine and other supplies.

Over 4,000 people from various barrios in Andap Valley, Surigao del Sur, have been forced to evacuate after the military bombed their communities from April 28 to May 17. The towns of Lianga, Marihatag, San Miguel and San Agustin are part of Andap Valley.

The large-scale evacuation began after Maj. Gen. Samuel Bagasin, chief of the 4th ID ordered the stepping-up of military operations against the New People's Army (NPA) in North-eastern Mindanao.

The AFP intensified their military operations after suffering defeats in encounters with the NPA in Buhisan and Hanipan in San Agustin and Kauswagan, Marihatag. Many soldiers, including two AFP officials, were killed in these encounters.

The military operations pounded Montenegro, Marihatag; Yadawan, Magkahunao and Kabuhian of Barangay Buhisan in San Agustin; the localities of Laganan and Caras-an in Barangay Tago; the localities of Han-ayan, Mambog and Manluy-a in Barangay Diatagan, Lianga; and Mat-i, Cagwait.

The military has retaliated by carrying out brutal and indiscriminate attacks against the people. With the hollow excuse that the NPA benefit from the resources that enter the barrios of Lianga, the military imposed a blockade on food and other supplies, such as medicine.

There is widespread razing of homes and even of the harvests of the peasants. Many residents have been arbitrarily picked up, interrogated and tortured. Examples of this were the beating-up of some residents by soldiers and

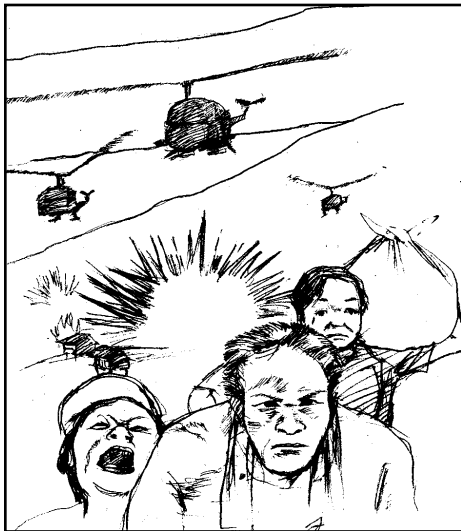


the reported rape of a young woman.

Among the particular cases of human rights violations are the following:

- * The abduction of eight peasants, four among whom were from Buhisan. According to witnesses, the four were forced to serve as guides in searching for a supposed explosives factory of the NPA. Up to now, they have not been allowed to return home and relatives fear for their lives. Simultaneous with the disappearance of the four, the military reported on May 8 that they had supposedly killed four NPA members. Up to now, the military has refused to divulge the names of the alleged Red fighters or show the relatives the corpses.

- * Murder of Jessie Bacasmas, a peasant from Barangay Kilometro 9. Bacasmas was shot while riding a truck carrying evacuees.



- * Torture of Junrey Cata, an 18-year old peasant from Magkahunao, San Agustin. The military accused Cata of having links with the NPA and tortured him to force him to reveal the whereabouts of the Red fighters.

Militarization in Southern Luzon has also intensified. Different military

units have almost simultaneously unleashed violence there. On May 9, the 76th IB illegally detained a team of human rights advocates in Tagkawayan, Quezon. Activists belonging to KARAPATAN-Southern Tagalog went there to stop the said military unit from violating the human rights of the people along the border of Quezon and Bicol. The military had been conducting operations in the barrios there for several months. This May, the military mobilized all of their personnel and four of their helicopter gunships.

On May 11, troops of the 76th IB also harassed a group of evacuees that sought refuge in a church in Lopez, Quezon. Some members of KARAPATAN-ST were in the church when they were intimidated by the military. The evacuees left their homes in Sitio Villaminda, Barangay Sto. Niño, Lopez because of military operations. At the same time, six people from a neighboring sitio have gone missing. Militarization intensified there after the NPA defeated the military operations in Villaminda on April 24. AB

Human rights violations in Cagayan Valley

There is a long list of crimes and human rights violations perpetrated by the military in Cagayan Valley.

In Gattaran, Cagayan, the 17th IB under the leadership of Col. Paulo Liwan systematically carried out harassment and violence against the people. This included the ransacking of homes and the theft of property and important documents of the peasants. There is widespread harassment and ill-treatment of those accused of being members of the NPA. Soldiers regularly conduct illegal searches. There have been cases where young people have been made to take off their clothes supposedly to check if they have any concealed weapons. In one case, a soldier poked a gun at the anus of a peasant. The soldiers forbid the peasants from going to their farms resulting in the drying up of their fields and the ruination of their livelihood.

In Jones, Isabela, the military unleashed their wrath against the defenseless people after the victorious tactical offensive of the NPA on January 24. Seventeen troops of the 45th IB were killed in the said ambush. To limit the movement of the barrio folk, the 45th IB planted land mines where the ambush took place. They forbid the peasants from going to their farms. Expectedly, the 45th IB later accused the NPA of planting the land mines.

Afterwards, the 45th IB forced some residents of Jones, including a child, to serve as guides. They also threatened and intimidated one family whom they accused of harboring



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Advances of the armed struggle in Northeastern Luzon

"The enemy has failed to thwart the advance of the revolutionary movement in Northeastern Luzon (NEL)." This was the summation of the Regional Committee of the Party in NEL of the state of the armed struggle in the region the past year. This occurred despite the intense military attacks of the AFP and their attempt to deceive the people through "development and social justice" programs.

According to the statement of the Regional Committee of the Party in NEL, the NPA has reinvigorated itself and is on the verge of further leaps and advance in the region. It is now reaping the victories of the Second Great Rectification Movement and has completely overcome conservatism.

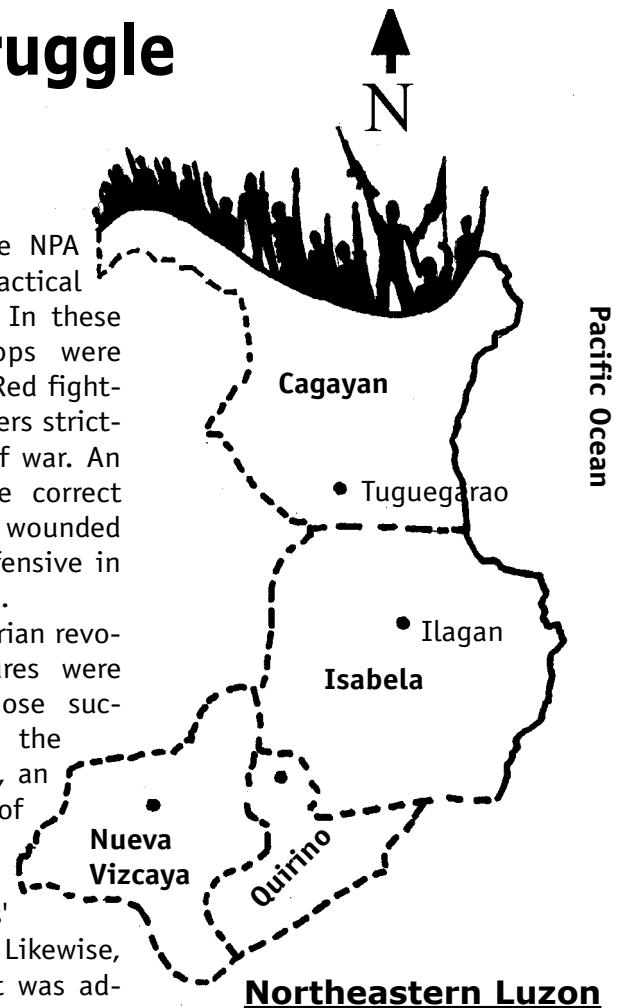
The NPA in NEL has gained strength in the ideological, political, organizational and military fields. Ninety-five (95%) percent of Party members in the NPA have already taken the Basic Party Course. Eighty-five (85%) percent of the guerrillas have also finished the Intermediate Party Course. The NPA has doubled in size as a result of vigorous recruitment, especially among the ranks of

youth activists.

In the past year, the NPA has launched victorious tactical offensives in the region. In these battles, 60 enemy troops were killed while not a single Red fighter was lost. The Red fighters strictly adhered to the rules of war. An example of this was the correct treatment of captives and wounded enemy soldiers in the offensive in Ladac, Caruppian, Baggao.

In advancing the agrarian revolution, important measures were implemented. Among those successfully achieved were the lowering of interest rates, an increase in the prices of some products, and some control over the pricing and sale of the peasants' products in certain areas. Likewise, the lowering of land rent was advanced, and the reactionary government's land confiscation in the name of "development" projects was thwarted. This included the devious cassava plantation project of Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco and the coal mining project of the Philippine National Oil Company.

Other deceptive measures of the US-Arroyo regime in line with



its land reform law have also been effectively exposed and opposed.

Agrarian revolution campaigns spread to the far reaches of the region, from the sitios to the town centers. No less than 350,000 residents of 150 barrios in 14 towns

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two fighters supposedly wounded during the ambush.

Soldiers have also violated with impunity the rights of captives Red fighters. This include the torture of three NPA members who were captured in the battle in Baracaoit, Gattaran on February 9. Fourteen soldiers were killed in that encounter.

The hand of Dennis "Ka Andy" Andaya was burned with a hot bullet casing and twisted. Rodel "Ka Neri"

Billones was kicked in the face, while the life of Aileen "Ka Chini" Bumanglag was threatened. They were subjected to interrogation overnight in the 17th IB headquarters in Masin, Alcala before being transferred to the PNP.

Likewise, the military continues to hide and deny the relatives the right to see Emmanuel Lorenzo "Ka Chico" Ruiz. The military captured Ka Chico as far back as April 5 in Sitio Bigao, Minanga, San Mariano, Isabela.

AB



QUEDANCOR—an instrument of exploitation

As the peasant masses in Cagayan Valley intensified their widespread struggle to lower lending rates and stop various forms of cheating by the commercial usurers, QUEDANCOR expanded its lending operations, targeting peasants in Jones and Echague. It offered lower lending rates compared to the prevailing 35-40% in the province.

But in analyzing the lending system of QUEDANCOR, it becomes clear that it brings the peasant masses no relief, only more deception and even worse exploitation.

High interest

The Quedan and Rural Credit Guarantee Corporation or QUEDANCOR was a program of the former Marcos regime that is being continued by Macapagal-Arroyo under the GMA Cares-Hybrid Planting Program (HPP). It is directly controlled by the Department of Agriculture which lends capital to peasants, fisherfolk, and owners of small poultry, piggery and other agribusiness. It has branches throughout the country.

Because the seedlings, fertilizer, pesticide and other equipment also come from the commercial usurers, QUEDANCOR prices them higher with the peasants. In Echague, for example, QUEDANCOR maintains a contract with the commercial usurer Arnel Castillo and the usurer Umblas

Ranvelis in Jones.

But the biggest source of QUEDANCOR's profits comes from the ever-rising lending interest.

Loan interest is computed at 6% for a six-month harvest cycle. If the peasant is unable to pay by the set date of payment, the interest in the balance of the loan turns out to be 10% per month. There are cases in which interest is charged on a



daily basis. In one example, ₱42/day was added for every ₱100,000 loan of the peasant.

Because of the cruelty of the lending interest, a monthly payment of up to ₱42,416.62 was imposed on a peasant from Caniguing, Echague for a mere loan of ₱22,562. If he is unable to pay within the next harvest, his debt will reach ₱68,477!

Systematic exploitation

Even before borrowing, the peasants have to pay many dues.

This includes the ₱1,600 membership fee and other miscellaneous payments that reach over ₱1,000.

Peasants need to belong to a group in order to borrow. The leader of the group stands as the guarantor. To ensure that the peasants are able to pay, QUEDANCOR takes their land titles or any properties as collateral.

The prices of the agricultural supplies from the commercial usurers that supply QUEDANCOR are much higher. Worse, peasants receive loans from QUEDANCOR in the form of overpriced low-grade commodities. For example, a lower class of Atlas fertilizer is distributed to the peasants even though the more expensive and high grade kind is noted in the receipt.

If we took into account all of the expenses, there is essentially no difference in the expenses between the 8% a month under QUEDANCOR and the prevailing 40% interest per harvest with the usurers in the barrio.

Beyond this, QUEDANCOR has become an instrument for confiscating the land of the peasants. There are more and more cases of land titles, houses and other property of borrowers being confiscated especially in a situation where the prices of the peasants' produce is so low while the prices of commodities and other daily needs are skyrocketing. AB

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reaped the benefits of the agrarian revolution.

Mutual help teams have now been established as basic economic organizations of the peasants. Through the mass organizations, various campaigns have been launched for the welfare of the people. This included

the successful campaign to eradicate malaria.

The influence of the movement has expanded to several hundred barrios and several tens of towns, and full-fledged mass organizations have been set up in contiguous areas in these places. The number of organized masses has grown by 218%. The number of activists and mass leaders has also grown by 56%. AB

Victorious ambush in Isabela

The ambush carried out by the fighters of the Reynaldo Pinon Command of the New People's Army (RPC-NPA) on the 45th IB PA on April 12 in Sitio Minanga, Bigao, San Mariano was a splendid victory. Three soldiers were killed in the said battle and three troops were also wounded. The NPA sustained no casualties.

According to Vic Balligi, spokesperson of the RPC-NPA, this tactical offensive was carried out amidst an onrush of military operations of the 45th IB and the 52nd Recon Coy in the towns of San Mariano, Ilagan and Benito Soliven, Isabela, which they had been conducting since March 29. The NPA used a command-detonated explosive to ensure that it would only explode when the targeted vehicle carrying the enemy troops passed.

The people rejoiced over the punishment of the troops of the 45th IB who had long made them suffer and inflicted violence on them. At no time did the residents of Minanga agree to the military basing in their area. Under the 45th IB, intimidation and the interrogation of barrio folk and the illegal inspection and ransacking of their loads to and from the barrio were rampant. There were instances when the military would also fire their guns indiscriminately.

The NPA timed its tactical offensive with the visit of the chief commander of the 502nd Bde. Gen. Rolando Senga. To cover up his embarrassing failure to thwart the NPA attack, Capt. George Domingo invented the story that they recovered two guns from the ambush site and that the two fighters they had supposedly wounded were now dead. **AB**

First outburst of transportation strike in Cagayan Valley

The joint mobilization and participation of tricycle and jeepneys drivers in the national transportation strike on April 18 was historic.

Drivers and other sectors simultaneously launched their protest actions in Isabela, Cagayan and Nueva Vizcaya. They joined the drivers and the people of the entire country to demand the immediate halt to oil price increases, a price rollback, the junking of the Oil Deregulation Law and the nationalization of the oil industry.

In Ilagan, parked jeeps gathered in the town center where they began a caravan. Ilagan-Sentro routes were paralyzed by 80%.



In Santiago City also in Isabela, over 50 peasants, students and government employees launched a picket-rally and noise barrage at the market.

In Tuguegarao City, Cagayan, over 70 peasants, students and other sectors staged a picket-rally at the parking lot in Don Domingo before marching towards the plaza and parking lot of Carig.

Over 100 also demonstrated in Solano, Nueva Vizcaya before 14 jeeps staged a caravan in Central Solano. **AB**



VAT, National ID continue to be opposed

SEVERAL days after the senate and congress passed the deceptive scheme in relation to the value-added tax (VAT) increase, 40 members of congress signed a resolution calling for its repeal while eight senators filed a case against it with the Supreme Court. Although the VAT remains at 10%, the law authorized Arroyo to raise it if the anticipated collection falls

short by January 2006. This new law was passed by congress last May 10.

Meanwhile, forty lawmakers, democratic personages, institutions and religious organizations are opposing in the Supreme Court the government's plan to implement the "National ID system" in the entire country. At the same time, they are asking for a tempo-

rary halt to the implementation of Executive Order (EO) 420 which seeks to carry out the National ID system.

Arroyo's EO 420 is no different from the then National ID program of the Ramos regime. In 1998, the Supreme Court itself declared that the national ID system that Ramos wanted to impose was contrary to civil liberties.